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SUBJECT: DHI QAR POLITICAL LANDSCAPE PART I: THE GOVERNOR

REF: STATE 171583

Classified By: Dhi Qar PRT Deputy Team Leader Richard Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Dhi Qar cable, the first in a series of six cables covering the political landscape of Dhi Qar Province and responding to the information request in reftel.

This cable focuses on the Dhi Qar governor.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: The formal political institutions of Dhi Qar Province are dominated by Shi'ite religious parties, particularly SCIRI/Badr, Fadila, and Dawa. An analysis of these institutions, however, does not provide a full picture of the province's political landscape. The Office of the Martyr Al-Sadr (OMS), for example, boycotted the January 2005 provincial elections but has a large following in the province. Tribal loyalties are also very strong in Dhi Qar, which is largely a rural province. Tribal loyalties take precedence over political party loyalties on many issues. Lastly, most of the major political parties have an attendant militia. These militias serve as a political force multiplier for those parties who have them, giving them political power beyond their numbers in the province's elected and executive institutions. This cable focuses on the governor, a SCIRI/Badr loyalist who has an uneasy relationship with leaders from other political parties. End Summary.

¶3. (C) The Governor of Dhi Qar Province, Kadhum Aziz Alwan, is from Nasiriyah, the capital city of Dhi Qar Province, though he was born in Al-Gharraf, also in Dhi Qar. Approximately 50 years old, he has strong ties to Iran. Alwan lived in Dhi Qar until 1983, when he defected to Iran during the Iran/Iraq War. At the time of his defection, he was a junior grade officer in the Iraqi Army. Following his defection, he lived in Iran from 1983 to 2003, when he returned to Iraq following the U.S. and Coalition liberation of Iraq. While in Iran, he joined the Badr Brigades and worked with Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim, who is presently the head of the SCIRI Party. He won the position of governor in part because of Hakim's support. During the last provincial election, Hakim arranged a deal with the PC whereby the Governor would be from SCIRI, the Chairman of the PC from Fadila, and the Vice-Chairman from Da'wa Party. Alwan was elected governor by the PC through a coalition of SCIRI members and Fadila members, with Dawa's acquiescence.

¶4. (C) Alwan's view of the U.S. presence and actions in Iraq in general, and in Dhi Qar specifically, seem conflicted. In a recent meeting with the PRT and MNF-I commanders, the Governor expressed his appreciation of the fact that the Coalition, and specifically America, had acted to free Iraq of Saddam Hussein. However, a few minutes later, he pointedly criticized what he believes to be America's inability to contain the mounting violence in the country, specifically in Baghdad. He went further by stating that

some believe (clearly including himself among them) that "America must be happy to see the continuing Shia-Sunni violence, since it surely has the capacity to end the violence if it wanted to." This indicates either the Governor's unrealistic assessment of America's capability to contain sectarian violence in Iraq, or a darker belief that America has nefarious designs on the country. Either way, his comments lead us to believe he views America's actions in Iraq as not wholly benevolent.

¶5. (C) The Governor does not work well with members of the PC who are not part of his SCIRI faction. One of the conditions of Alwan assuming the governorship was that he would not try to influence the Provincial Reconstruction Development Council (PRDC), chaired by independent, on programming issues. In June 2006, one year into this agreement, the Governor began to try to insert himself into the PRDC process. His actions prompted the PC Chairman, a Fadhila member, to remove the PRDC's independent chairman and install a Fadhila member in his place.

KHALILZAD